

Newsletter

EREHWON FARM

Week 3-June 22, 2008

This is a Healthy Alternative A week

Farmer Tim Reports

Greetings, subscribers!

Work continues at a frantic pace in the fields, scrounging for places to plant more beds, mulching the tiny weeds that will be unpullable by the end of the season if we don't and keeping an eye on pests. There are numerous potato beetles in the field but only a few plants are showing enough damage to hurt yields. Healthy plants have numerous methods of warding off pests so that's our focus and we are spraying kelp, fish, and Jen's secret blend of compost and alfalfa tea each week. Farmer T. wasn't watching the wind direction on Thursday and got quite a dose of the stuff; maybe it'll be good for him too! (*Hmmm—that's what that peculiar smell was—Beth*) Thanks to all who have left bags of newspaper for mulching and bags of other greens to keep our compost piles working.

Overall, production is a week or two behind last year. Cool soils in May hindered germination and growth of some crops, especially the warm weather ones, but growth is speeding up now with the warm temperatures and ample moisture. We will be scraping this week and possibly next to fill the bags but be assured that we will make up for it later in the season.

Last week volunteers Chuck Wettergreen and Steve Trisko noticed the sorry shape of our well and irrigation pump system. While I wasn't watching, they bought the needed fittings and have nearly finished hooking everything up. Thanks, guys! I'm pretty sure that the best way to keep the rain coming is to have a first-class drip irrigation system working. ;-)



If you have not been out to inspect the farm, June 28 and 29 might be the time to come. The Garfield Farm Museum is holding an arts, crafts and antiques show from 10-5 on both days at our beloved Mongerson Farm. Come and do some great shopping and benefit the Garfield Farm Museum at the same time. Farmer T. will be there to give you a farm tour. Go to www.garfieldfarm.org and click on the "Art at the Farm" banner for more details, including a list of artists.

When you come out to the farm, you may see a few strategically placed butterfly nets (Thanks Chuck!). Feel free to race around capturing as many white cabbage moths as you can. Farmer T. will record your catch and will report in the newsletter. We have a nice wooded area for a picnic and two hammocks to relax in and Bucky the farm dog will be available, too.

We Get Mail

Thanks for the section in your newsletter! And may I say, the newsletter looks great!!!!
Gerard

*So did your show on Fathers' Day!
Hope you guys wear your safety glasses when using your power saws*

to cut up the old steel drums! tf, Farm Safety Advisor

Hey Beth, Just wanted to send you a note and let you know that the radishes really were terrific. I can see why you are known for them!

Looking forward to next week's box!

Take care,
Carolyn Brown

Thanks for the feedback, Carolyn, and your positive support.

What do mean I can't pick up til next week?#@!@#%!! Joke. Loved the newsletter again. My kids think they are celebrities...seriously, when Tim let them plant and me drive, I thought I was in heaven. Amazing how one's childhood can dramatically impact one's present!! Another dream come true at the farm. You may want to rename the farm: Where Dreams Become Real Life. Just a thought. Hope to see you Wednesday. Candy and company

*Whew! This is likely to get crazy as word leaks out about the fantasy farm! I have seen a couple of low-flying helicopters checking us out and the glint of binoculars from the tree line across the field – reporters checking us out? Well, what happens on the farm...tf
PS: the beans are up!*

In your boxes this week

The theme this week is "Herb it Up." The idea is to encourage everyone to experiment with herbs. Our planned

harvest includes Lettuce - either Rouge d'Hiver or Black-Seeded Simpson, kale - a mixture of red Russian and green, lamb's quarters, cilantro or other cut herb (oregano, basil, lemon thyme, lovage, sage, mint, chives, or rosemary), assorted potted herbs (1 per subscriber), garlic scapes, Swiss chard, and sugar snap peas.

Subscribers who have Healthy Plus shares can expect all of the above *plus* claytonia, cress, and Alcosa savoy cabbage.

Save the date

Garlic Harvest--July 19

We are planning a fantastic volunteer event centered around harvesting the garlic. This is a great activity for all ages. Details are still being firmed up and we will pass them on as they become available.



Garlic in the field

Pick-up for July 4 week

This year July 4 falls on a Friday. Heritage Prairie will be closed that day for the holiday, so our Friday pick-up will be on Thursday, July 3. To accommodate your vacation plans, subscribers can pick up then or choose to pick up on Wednesdays instead. Just e-mail Beth (alpropst7@yahoo.com) if you will pick up on Wednesday. No reply is required for Thursday pick up.

Delivery Schedule

12:30--van leaves farm
1:00-1:30--delivery at Ball Hort

1:30-2:00--delivery at Wheaton
2:00-3:00--delivery at Lombard
3:00-3:30--delivery at Elgin

All times are approximate and may vary.

Farm pick-up times

Wednesday: 4:00-6:30
Friday: 2:30-5:30

Please try to pick up during these times. We are not available for early pick up because we are busy harvesting and processing your veggies and do not arrive to set up at Heritage Prairie until 30 minutes before the pick up starts. If you have problems or questions about the pick, please call Beth (630-485-9964) or Tim (630-485-9963).

Wish List

Yard waste for the compost pile (grass clippings, non-woody weeds, and leaves; also kitchen veggie scraps). Please, no animal waste or woody matter. You can bring to the farm or drop in the back of the farm truck on pickup days (you can recognize our truck as it will surely be the oldest one in the lot!).

Volunteer rock monger on mowing day.

Person with a little time and maybe a book to read to help break in our new hammocks. "Two hammocks -- no waiting!"



Farmer Tim hard at work troubleshooting the hammock

Newspapers and cardboard for mulching to kill weeds.

Paint can lids, quart, half and full gallon. We have designed a power winder to pull up drip tape and will need a couple of hundred by the end of the season.

Wagons for use in harvesting.

For the home gardener

Intern Jackie Kleck offers this tip: Starbucks gives away their used coffee grounds. Simply, visit any location (avoid peak times) and look for a bucket labeled "Grounds for Your Garden." If the bucket is empty (or missing!), just ask a server if it's a good time to get used coffee grounds. You will probably get coffee filters along with the grounds but they are biodegradable.

Coffee by-products can be used in the garden and farm as follows:

- * Sprinkle used grounds around plants before rain or watering, for a slow-release nitrogen.
- * Add to compost piles to increase nitrogen balance. Coffee filters and tea bags break down rapidly during composting.
- * Dilute with water for a gentle, fast-acting liquid fertilizer. Use about a half-pound can of wet grounds in a five-gallon bucket of water; let sit outdoors to achieve ambient temperature.
- * Mix into soil for houseplants or new vegetable beds.
- * Encircle the base of the plant with a coffee and eggshell barrier to repel pests.
- * If you are into vermi-posting, feed a little bit to your worms.

If you don't want to try any of these yourself, we would be very happy to receive the occasional box of coffee grounds.

Grandma Beth's Cookbook

Herbs

The use of herbs and spices date back prior to recorded history. Many early records reveal a mixture of medicinal and magical uses for herbs. Eventually, herbs were also used to enhance the flavor of foods.

When using herbs and spices to season foods, it is important to use them sparingly. Herbs should be used to enhance the food's natural flavors, rather than to dominate them. In general, the weaker the flavor of the main staple item, the lower the level of added seasoning required to achieve a satisfactory balance of flavor in the end product.

A good general rule of thumb is not to mix two very strong herbs together, but rather one strong and one or more milder flavors to complement both the stronger herb and the food.

Herbal combinations can also be minced and added to a meal immediately upon completion of cooking, or as a garnish before serving.

Wash herbs when you are ready to use them. Wash smaller amounts of herbs thoroughly under running water and pat dry or spin in a salad spinner. If you're washing a larger amount of herbs at one time, place them in a clean sink or deep bowl filled with cold water and swish around. Shake off moisture or spin dry in a salad spinner. Pat off any remaining moisture with clean paper towels.

While some recipes call for a sprig or sprigs of herbs, normally the part of the herb you harvest will be the leaves. For herbs with sturdier stems, such as marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme, you can strip off the leaves by running your fingers down the stem from top to bottom. With small-leaved plants such as thyme, you can use both leaves and stems for cooking early in the season. Later in the season, as the stems become tougher, use just the leaves. For herbs with tender stems, such as parsley and cilantro, it's OK if you snip some of the stem in with the leaves when you're cutting these herbs.

For most recipes, unless otherwise directed, mince herbs into tiny pieces. Chop with a chef's knife on a cutting board or snip with a kitchen scissors.

Dried herbs are stronger than fresh, and powdered herbs are stronger than crumbled. A useful formula is: 1/4 teaspoon powdered herbs = 3/4 to 1 teaspoon crumbled = 2 teaspoons fresh.

Leaves should be chopped very fine because the more cut surface exposed the more flavor will be released.

The flavoring of herbs is lost by extended cooking. Add herbs to soups or stews about 45 minutes before completing the cooking. But for cold foods such as dips, cheese, vegetables and dressings, herbs should be added several hours or overnight before using. If preparing a dish that requires a lengthy cooking period, you can use a small, tied bunch of fresh herb sprigs (known as a bouquet garni and customarily containing parsley, bay leaf, and thyme).

For casseroles and hot sauces, add finely chopped fresh or dried herbs directly to the mixture.

To become familiar with the specific flavor of an herb, try mixing it with margarine or butter, let it set for at least an hour, and spread on a plain cracker.

Recipe ideas:

Make an herb butter: Take 1/2 cup (1 stick) of softened butter and mix in about 4 tablespoons of a fresh herb. Lay out a piece of saran wrap, place the butter in the middle roll the saran wrap up to form a "log" out of the butter. Put in the refrigerator and anytime you need a pat of butter just cut it off the "log". (Hints for "log" butter: potatoes, bread, steaks, noodles or any kind of sauce).

Chop one or more herbs and sprinkle on salads. We like mint, lemon thyme, any basil, parsley, or chives—alone or in combination—served this way.

Chop one or more herbs and add to scrambled eggs. Pretty much any herb or combination of herbs is good this way. Also add onions, garlic, grated cheese, or chopped greens to perk up your scrambled eggs.

Chop and add to stir-fry at the very end. Herbs that work well in stir fry are the basil, chives, oregano, lemon thyme, and thyme.

Of course, rosemary, oregano, thyme, and basil are great on pizzas and in pasta sauces.

Sage and rosemary are good with most red meats.

Add to garlic butter to use on garlic bread.

Use your imagination and experiment. You can hardly go wrong.

Lamb's Quarter

Many people see lamb's quarter as nothing more than a common weed, never realizing that a tasty and nutritious green vegetable could be enjoyed, free for the picking. Lamb's quarter greens are better than spinach, a close relative, both for flavor and nutrition. The leaves and stems are edible and absolutely delicious, with a flavor that can be compared to spinach or chard with an earthy, mineral rich taste. It's difficult to describe, but if you enjoy leafy greens such as kale, collards, and spinach you'll love lamb's quarter and enjoy the change of pace provided by its distinct flavor.

When cooking lamb's quarter the easiest preparation is to simply steam the leaves and stems in a small amount of water until tender. The greens will cook very quickly and turn a dark green color as they shrink down during cooking. The cooked greens are delicious just as they are with no additional seasoning or flavoring necessary.

The young leaves and smaller stems can also be eaten raw in salads. Or you can experiment by substituting lamb's quarter for spinach or chard in some of your favorite recipes.

Lamb's Quarter Quiche

Make your favorite pie crust, or purchase one already made..

Filling:

4 cups lamb's quarter leaves, chopped
 ¼ cup onion, chopped
 2 Tbsp butter
 1 Tbsp flour
 ½ tsp salt
 3 eggs
 1½ cups milk
 2 cups (8 oz) Swiss cheese, grated

1. Pre-bake pie shell in oven at 450° for 5-10 minutes until lightly browned.
2. Sautee lamb'squarters and onion in butter until tender (don't overcook)
3. Add flour and salt and mix together
4. In a separate bowl or in a blender whip together eggs and milk.
5. Add egg mixture to lamb'squarters.
6. Spread the grated Swiss cheese over the bottom of the pie crust.
7. Pour filling over the top of the cheese.
8. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes. Remove from oven and let set for a few minutes before cutting.
9. Serve hot or cold.

Sauteed Salmon on a Bed of Greens

This recipe works really well on salad greens (lettuce, spicy mix, spinach, all greens mix) that are a little bit wilted, so if you find toward the end of the week that you have a few left over that are looking sad, this is your dish.

Saute **chopped onions** and **garlic** in **olive oil**. (How much you use depends on your taste. I personally believe there is no such thing as too much garlic, so I tend to use a lot. I also like this dish with a lot of onion.)

Add **canned salmon**. (Canned tuna, canned clams, or fresh salmon or tuna would also work well. If you are a vegetarian, you can leave the meat out.)

Add **lemon juice** to keep from drying out.

Add some **vegetables** (I like frozen corn in the wintertime, but sugar snap peas, broccoli, or summer squash will also work well.) I also add capers and sometimes herbs (maybe a little lemon basil, oregano, or thyme).

Heat through (if adding raw vegetables, cook until the veggies are the desired degree of doneness).

Chop or tear the **greens** into bite-sized pieces.

Spoon salmon mixture over the greens while still hot. This will wilt the greens a little bit, but since the greens are already a little past prime, this will mask that fact. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

Kale with Bacon

Anything's better with bacon.

Kale (remove the tough parts like the central vein in the leaf)
 Garlic
 Bacon slabs
 Butter
 Seasoning (such as pepper) to taste

Shred kale as finely as possible (the finer it is, the less time it will take to cook).

Heat some butter; add diced bacon, and minced garlic. Cook 1 minute.

Add kale, season and cook until water has evaporated (this could take up to 30 minutes, depending on how thinly you shred the kale).